**Benefit of Signing CTBT**

4044. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is a better international appreciation of India's security concern now that what it was a month ago because of Government's diplomatic initiative taken recently;

(b) whether Government are now eager to secure some concessions before addressing the issue of signing of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty in a meaningful fashion, as reported in the Hindustan Times, dated the 6th July, 1998; and

(c) if so, what are the details of benefits that would accrue to India by signing the CTBT at this juncture?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHRA RAJE): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) India's stand on CTBT was based on the assessment that the Treaty did not address our security concerns. The tests conducted by India in May, 1998 have given us the basic capability for assured security. This is also the rationale for the voluntary moratorium which fulfils the basic obligation required under the Treaty. We are now prepared to move forward on discussing the CTBT. This exercise is underway in our bilateral discussions with key countries and reciprocal responses that would facilitate progress are being explored.

**Remarks made by British Foreign Secretary**

4045. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item which appeared in the Hindustan Times, dated 3rd July, 1998 captioned "British Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, spoils both at NRIs' meeting" co-hosted by the Institute of NRIs in UK and the Indo-British Cooperation Banquet Committee which was primarily meant to be a social event held in honour of Mr. Cook in London on 2nd July, 1998; and

(b) if so, what is Government's reaction to the reported remarks of British Foreign Secretary that "India did not enhance its security, economic or its standing in the modern world by opting to carry out the nuclear tests" in Pokhran?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHRA RAJE): (a) Yes Sir.

(b) Government of India's decisions on matters relating to our national security are based on our own assessment of our legitimate security concerns and requirements.

**Negotiations between India and Nepal**

4046. SHRI RAJUBHAI A. PARMAR:
SHRIMATI VEENA VERMA:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether any negotiations between India and Nepal to improve bilateral relations and trade have taken place following the visit of the President of India to that country;

(b) if so, the details thereof, and the agreements and protocols, if any, reached as a result thereof; and

(c) the follow-up action since taken in the light thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHRA RAJE): (a) to (c) Yes, Sir. Following the President's visit to Nepal, the 2nd meeting of the Joint Working Group (JWG) on Border Management was held in Delhi from 16-17 June, 1998. At the meeting, a number of decisions with the objective of preventing misuse of the open border between India and Nepal by undesirable elements, were taken by the two sides. The meeting was followed up by Home Secretary level talks on June 18, which, inter alia, reviewed the decisions taken by the JWG.

The First Director General level talks on Customs Cooperation were held in New Delhi from 15-16 June, 1998 to discuss mechanism to monitor and effectively combat smuggling activities across the open India-Nepal border.